

10 Tips to “Water” without Taps

Weather Forecast

After great hope of some frontal systems moving through the South-East in Sussex we have seen less than 1mm of precipitation in the last week.

The outlook for the next 10 days is bringing more summer weather with temperatures up to 31° centigrade in the South, though with cooler mornings until Sunday 10th August.

Only northern and western regions will see the odd shower or thunderstorm.

Overall, we can expect more drought conditions.

With hosepipe bans and reduced availability of tap water the question beckons: How can we “water” the plants without using tap water?



1 The hoe – Your Best Watering Can

Farmers used to proclaim that the hoe was your best watering can. How is that possible and what did they mean? How can you “water” your garden with your hoe?

The best way to create dew is hoeing your garden beds around sunset with a light Dutch or oscillating hoe, preferably copper or brass coated and bring up moist soil from 2-3 cm below the surface.

This moist soil will help to cool down the night air sufficiently to create 1-2mm/night precipitation in form of dew.

Btw. This way you can keep your garden weed free, as the weed seeds are often germinating without rain.

By working in germinating weed seeds, you add extra vital forces, nutrition and moisture from sprouting seedlings.



2 The Hoe – Your Best Tool to Preserve Moisture in the Soil

When you hoe with a light hoe the top 2 cm of your soil in the early morning, it will create a “dust” mulch and will prevent the remaining moisture to evaporate from the soil surface.



3 Another trick to Attract Moisture to Your Vegetables

Before sowing or planting, take a spade and insert it to its full depths in the planting rows

and push it back and forth to create a V-ditch, which you fill with mature, well-rotted compost vertically in the rows.

This creates compaction along the rows drawing moisture to the plants, rooting mainly in this enriched V-ditch and losing less moisture to surrounding area. Russian research showed an increase in any circumstance of 20-30 %.

4 Intersow Groundcover

Sow preferably legume groundcover plants like white clover, subterranean (Australian) clover, birds foot trefoil and vetch between the rows. Groundcover cools the atmosphere in the night to provoke more dew formation and uses less moisture than it actually provides.

Added benefit:

- Feeds your vegetables and the soil with Nitrogen
- Keeps down weed seed germination
- Increases biodiversity in the soil
- Provides food for insects and eventually birds with their seeds
- Prevents pests and diseases

5 Encourage groundcover Weeds

I started collecting annual weed seeds. Chickweed is my preferred weed for groundcover and eating.

Also, I recommend: scarlet pimpernel, Veronica, wild vetch and verdolaga

Chickweed groundcover in trials in 1980s proved to increase yields of potatoes by 20 - 30%

6 Companion Planting with Deep Rooting Plants

I suggest you experiment also with deep rooting plants like agricultural chicory (leaves are like dandelion leaves), stone clover, lupines, buckwheat, phacelia, flax (linen) and weeds like sowthistle, groundsel and black nightshade (all with edible leaves for steaming and in salads).



Use of Biodynamic Preparations

7 Horn Manure Preparation

Apply Horn Manure Preparation on three consecutive days around sunset.

That will help to provide dew formation, particularly applied with cloudy sky and low pressure front.

8 Horn Manure Preparation with Valerian Preparation

Apply Horn Manure Preparation on three consecutive days together with valerian or chamomile preparation stirred into the barrel the last fifteen minutes of stirring around sunset. In trials over prolonged times this has shown to deepen root development and therefore the plants capacity to access water in deeper layers.

9 Horn Manure and Horn Silica Preparation

Apply Horn Manure Preparation on three consecutive days around sunset.

Follow up with applying Horn Silica Preparation on three consecutive days around sunset – Yes at sunset. This reverses the evaporation cycle and plants seem to be able to stay with full turgor and will prevent bolting in my experience during prolonged droughts.

10 Prevention Is Better than Cure

The ultimate way to not be affected by droughts in the future is by practicing fertility management by building up the humus content and increasing the depth of your topsoil.

How do you achieve that?

Appropriate green manuring and cover cropping, when beds are not used for growing vegetables, herbs or flowers with legumes, deep rooting plants creating abundant root systems and networks, fixing nitrogen and increasing the Organic Matter content.

Additionally, you can increase the formation of new soil by adding mature biodynamic compost to introduce the best microbiome and macro-organisms, which will help build soil instead of using quick return composts, which introduce a microbiome which will break down soil Organic Matter.

Last Resort Watering

If you do have to do an emergency watering as your vegetables might still suffer, water in the evening, just before a low pressure system comes through with a front of rain and soak the soil only in the rows of the vegetables, ideally with drip irrigation or exudation pipelines which you can install below the rows underground.

I wish you great success in applying these more subtle ways of dealing with this challenging summer drought.

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